



# Broome County Environmental Management Council

Debra A. Preston, County Executive

February 21, 2013

Congressman Richard Hanna  
110 Genessee St., Suite 130  
Auburn, NY 13021

Congressman Hanna:

The Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC), the County's citizen advisory committee on environmental matters, would like to express support for continued and permanent federal funding for the maintenance of the Southern Tier's critical streamgage network. We were alarmed to hear that funding for the continued operation of these gages might be discontinued this year. Local streamgages at Binghamton, Windsor, Vestal, and in surrounding counties generate vital data used by local, state and federal agencies to predict when flooding will occur, allowing for advanced warning and preparation for disasters. Early flood warnings give businesses and residents in flood-prone areas time to secure their properties and move to safer locations before flooding begins. Without a permanent funding line established for these gages, the loss of this essential equipment is continually looming from year to year. Therefore, we urgently request that the Federal government make a firm, long-term commitment to funding this critical system.

At only \$215,000 for gages in the Upper Susquehanna watershed, the funding for continued operation and maintenance is a minimal and justified expense. The Susquehanna River Basin is one of the most flood-prone areas in the country and there is no question that flooding will continue to impact our communities. According to the County's recently updated draft Hazard Mitigation Plan, over 60,000 people in Broome are estimated to live in the floodplain, making them vulnerable during these disasters. In September 2011 flooding associated with Tropical Storm Lee devastated Broome County communities and our neighbors. While the economic losses were great, we were lucky no lives were lost in the County during that disaster, due in part to effective evacuation procedures and warning systems based on streamgage data. Damage during this event alone totaled into the hundreds of millions due to property loss, economic impacts and infrastructure damage. Furthermore, the Hazard Mitigation Plan states that there is potential for damage on the order of over a \$1 billion during events of this nature. Without early and accurate information provided by the gages, the ability to carry out orderly and efficient response would be limited and these costs would have been exacerbated. This is not to mention costs of a similar magnitude associated with additional flooding events in 2005 and 2006, only a few years earlier.

Broome County's municipalities are committed to protecting their residents and businesses, but this cannot be done overnight. Streamgage data is vital for long-term monitoring required for watershed and hazard mitigation planning that helps to minimize the impacts of disasters. As Broome County's advisory board on environmental matters, the EMC values this planning for the maintenance of public safety and the health of our natural resources. This data is essential to develop a clear picture on which we can base informed policy and programming decisions. As data shows, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. Therefore, the importance of river and stream level monitoring has only increased. A continued record of water level data over time allows us to understand how the watershed changes along with external influences such as climate, land use, and water consumption, among others.

We strongly urge you to consider the essential value that the streamgages have provided to local, state and federal agencies serving Broome County and the surrounding areas. We ask that you work to secure long-term funding for the ongoing maintenance and operation of these gages, enabling us to focus on protecting our communities and preventing the impacts of disasters, without fear of losing one of the most valued tools in these efforts.

Thank you,

Bill Heaviside  
Acting Chair

BH/bal

Cc: Debbie Preston, County Executive  
Jerry Marinich, Chair of the Legislature  
Aaron Martin, Legislative Clerk



# Broome County Environmental Management Council

Debra A. Preston, County Executive

February 21, 2013

Senator Charles E. Schumer  
15 Henry Street, Room M103 607-772-6792  
Binghamton, NY 13901

Senator Schumer:

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Aaron Martin, Legislative Clerk



# Broome County Environmental Management Council

Debra A. Preston, County Executive

February 21, 2013

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
James Handley Federal Building  
100 S. Clinton St., Room 1470  
PO Box 7378  
Syracuse, NY 13261

Senator Gillibrand:

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